

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE CONCERTMASTER
THROUGH THE BAROQUE, CLASSICAL, AND ROMANTIC ERAS

Leah E. Bonas
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COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE CONCERTMASTER THROUGH THE BAROQUE,
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BY

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ABSTRACT

During the evolution of the orchestra from 1600-1900, the concertmaster remained a key leadership figure who held great influence over the ensemble. This paper examines the concertmaster's changing role in the orchestra throughout the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras and studies the examples of exceptional concertmasters from each era, giving further historical insight into the lives and duties in of these orchestral leaders and musicians. During the Baroque era, when ensembles lacked conductors, the concertmaster shared control of the orchestra with the keyboard-player or time-beater. During the Classical Era, the concertmaster gained a larger role in the orchestra and often acted simultaneously as conductor, manager, and director. The specific duties of a concertmaster outlined in numerous treatises included unifying articulation, bowings, and ornamentation in the orchestra. In the Romantic era, significant changes in musical compositions and the structure of the orchestra led to the need for an autonomous conductor. As a result, the concertmaster was reduced from his previous role to become an assistant to the conductor and interpreter for the orchestra. His focus turned to the uniformity of the string section and the increasing number of concertmaster solos. In light of the changing orchestral environment, the concertmasters of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras proved to be experienced musicians, effective teachers, and respected leaders.

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OVERVIEW

Throughout the evolution of the orchestra, the concertmaster has always been a central figure demonstrating an impressive array of musical knowledge and leadership skills that have shaped the ensemble. Today, a concertmaster is the first-chair violinist of an orchestra and is in charge of leading his or her section as well as interpreting the conductor's motions for the entire ensemble. This definition has not always been accurate as the concertmaster's role has undergone considerable changes since the beginnings of the orchestra as an ensemble in the 1600s. Over the past centuries, the development of the orchestra and the gradual change in musical styles directly affected the concertmaster and his duties. In the Baroque and Classical eras, the concertmaster acted simultaneously as the conductor, music director, and rehearsal manager of the orchestra. In the Romantic era, the concertmaster became second-in-command as a conductor acquired full charge of the orchestra. Usually the most experienced violinist in the section, the concertmaster often coached the other musicians and was recognized by critics for the overall excellence of the orchestra. Concertmasters were also attributed with standardizing the performance practice of a string section, such as the use of uniform bowing. According to eighteenth-century writer Johann Joachim Quantz, the quality of an ensemble was often a direct reflection on the concertmaster's example and leadership skills (206). Examining the duties, lifestyles, and history surrounding these early concertmasters gives one a deep appreciation for their enduring role in the orchestra.

Further defining of the term concertmaster is best achieved by providing a description of the modern orchestra. Consisting of a large group of musicians, an orchestra requires unity between the many different sections: brass, woodwinds, percussion, and strings. Within these four groups, each individual instrument has a principal player that leads their section. Due to the sheer size of the orchestra, a conductor is needed to not only cue and keep time, but to convey a

uniform mood and expression desired for a piece. The concertmaster, however, is a secondary leader with many layers of duties. At the smallest level, he or she is in charge of the first violin section, deciding bowings and fingerings and cuing with physical motion. Next, the concertmaster is the leader of the string section, which is the equivalent of an enlarged string quartet of which he or she is first violin. The concertmaster sets the standard of tone and articulation to be followed by the strings and has final say in bowing decisions. Ultimately, the concertmaster acts as a second conductor to the entire ensemble by conveying musical intention through movement. He or she also interprets the motions of the conductor and communicates this to the rest of the orchestra. Additionally, a concertmaster's duties extend beyond rehearsals to act as the social representative of the orchestra to the public.

These modern expectations, however, were established by early concertmasters in the years 1600-1900. During this time, the structure and personnel of the orchestra underwent significant development, particularly in its authority figures. The history of the role of the concertmaster, therefore, can be best understood by studying the history of orchestral leadership. In the Baroque era, ensembles varied widely in size, ranging from seven players (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 31) to as many as forty players (Spitzer 42). These ensembles functioned without a conductor. The leader was either the concertmaster or keyboard player, both of whom kept time while playing their instruments. In the Classical era, the ensemble grew in size. With the decline of the keyboard instrument, the Classical orchestra was led entirely by the concertmaster, who acted as conductor, manager, and director of the ensemble. In the Romantic era, orchestras continued to grow and expand, and the need for a separate conductor arose. As a result, the concertmaster became subservient to the new conductor, focusing his efforts on acting as supportive figure.

BAROQUE ERA (1600-1750) of the Dresden court

INTRODUCTION

The narrative of the concertmaster begins with birth of orchestra in the Baroque era (1600-1750). During this time, the development of music was under the control of the nobility who hired court composers and instrumentalists (Taruskin 240). Large ensembles consisting of as many as forty instruments were not a new concept in the early seventeenth century (Spitzer 42). These ensembles, however, varied greatly in the types of instruments that were used; additionally, the instruments were rarely played all at once. The early orchestra, therefore, began to develop as the collection of instruments became more standardized, and as the instruments played all together, rather than in small, broken bands (Spitzer 69). Growing in popularity in the mid-1600s, the violin became an indispensable member of the developing orchestra. It was therefore only natural that a violinist would be a viable contender for sole leadership of the ensemble.

The violin's rising prominence in the Baroque era was due to new structural developments of the instrument. Violin-like instruments had existed since medieval times and varied in the number of strings (Boyden par. 21). During the 1500s, Italian luthiers developed the violin family which consisted of rough equivalents to the violin, viola, cello, and bass (Boyden par. 22). This collection of stringed instruments was used for dance and vocal music (Boyden par. 40, 42). In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Italy continued to be at the forefront of development as the modern violin was introduced and perfected by the generations of luthiers in Cremona. These famous violin-makers include Nicolo Amati (1596-1684), Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737), and Giuseppe Guarneri 'del Gesu' (1698-1744). Cremonese violins were purchased and imported all throughout Europe by dignitaries as symbols of wealth (Boyden par. 48). These instruments were also much sought after by musicians. For example, by command of

the King of Poland, concertmaster Jean Baptiste Volumier (1677-1728) of the Dresden court orchestra went personally to Cremona in 1715 to order ten Stradivari violins (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 49). With this improved model of the violin, Italian violinists were the ones to expand the solo repertoire and technique of the instrument. Figures such as Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770), Pietro Locatelli (1695-1764), and Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) were famous composers, performers, and pedagogues who significantly contributed to the violin's development. These musicians wrote hundreds of works for violin including concerti and sonatas, and greatly advanced the technical knowledge and popularity of the instrument. As a result of these new advancements, the violin, and in turn the string family, became a defining participant in the early orchestra.

The Baroque orchestra was nothing like orchestra of today as it differed greatly in size and purpose. The earliest examples are difficult to determine as the size of early orchestras was so small that they resembled chamber groups, containing as few as seven instruments (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 31). In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the core of the orchestra was a chordal instrument, usually the harpsichord, which provided the harmonic backbone of Baroque pieces. A small group of strings, winds, and sometimes brass and percussion accompanied the harpsichord (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 10). In the eighteenth century, the average size of the string section consisted of twelve violins, three violas, three cellos, and two double basses (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 29). It was generally assumed that the violins were divided equally into first and second violins – six in each section (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 31). Larger, more extravagant orchestras had as many as thirty-six violins. The smallest of ensembles had four to six violins and one of every other string instrument (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 31). For winds, the most popular additions were pairs of oboes, bassoons, and sometimes flutes (Carse,

XVIIIth Century 33, 34). With exception of horns, brass instruments were unlikely to appear in orchestra until later in the eighteenth century (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 40).

The Baroque orchestra's primary purpose was to accompany vocalists, soloists, and dancers. This function was seen in the performances of opera, vocal church music, concertos, and ballet, which were popular musical genres across Europe at the time. The orchestra also served as entertainment for functions and celebrations, which were held indoors and outdoors (Spitzer 507). Purely instrumental music, which highlighted the orchestra as its own entity, did not become popular until later in the 1700s (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 14).

SHARED LEADERSHIP

In the beginning of the Baroque Era, the general leadership of the orchestra naturally fell to the musician at the chordal instrument as it provided the foundation of the music. The concept of a separate conductor did not exist as the ensembles were small enough to be led by a player from within the ensemble. Thanks to new structural and technical development, the violin became a significant and essential member of the orchestra (Ostling 19). As a result, the leader of the first violins acted as an alternative leader, depending on the genre of music being played. The common arrangement of instruments reflects this hierarchy. The keyboard instrument was placed at the center with the violin leader close at hand (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 45). Bass instruments were placed behind the keyboard instrument to keep close contact with the keyboard-leader (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 45). According to Quantz, any instrument could lead, but the violin was best as it was "absolutely indispensable in the accompanying body, and is also more penetrating than any of the other instruments most used for accompanying" (207). Quantz's use of the word "accompanying" further supports the view that the orchestra was subservient to soloists.

The divided leadership between the keyboard-leader and concertmaster was known as the 'dual system' (Ostling 20). This structure was primarily used in works such as opera and oratorios. The keyboardist was in charge of the vocalists and overall performance while the leader of the first violins was in charge of the instrumentalists, earning the name 'concertmaster' (Ostling 20). The specific title of the position differed across Europe. The concertmaster was called "*primo violin* or *capo d'orchestra* in Italy, *Anführer* or *Konzertmeister* in Germany, *premier violon* in France", and 'the leader' in England (Spitzer 391). The dual system also proved necessary in larger ensemble works, especially as sight lines became an issue (Ostling 19). From his seated position, the keyboardist could only motion so much with his head and hands while he was playing (Ostling 19). The shared leadership also gave rise to ill feelings between the keyboardist and concertmaster if one attempted to assume total control (Ostling 20).

In addition to the keyboardist and concertmaster, a third option for leadership was the time-beater. This individual did not play an instrument, but stood at the front of the ensemble and gave "visual or audible" cues in order to keep the time (Ostling 19). The time-beater utilized "the foot, head, one hand, both hands, a roll of sheet music, or stick" (Ostling 19) to communicate these cues. Audible time-beating was particularly helpful for dancers and singers. The concertmaster, keyboard-leader, and time-beater could appear in various combinations, including all at once. Performances of large pieces incorporating voices and instruments often benefited from the addition of a time-beater to the dual system (Ostling 20).

Leadership preferences differed by country as each favored particular musical genres. In France, for example, opera and ballet were most popular. The leadership method of choice was often the time-beater. One of the earliest string ensembles was organized by composer Jean Baptiste Lully in 1640. Entitled *24 Violons du Roi*, the ensemble consisted of twenty-four violins

and was directed by Lully who stood at the front, pounding a staff to keep time (Boyden par. 83). At the Paris Opera, the time-beater would occasionally switch between audible and visible cues (Stowell 22). Performances in France also employed a combination of a time-beater and concertmaster (Stowell 23). "Although the concertmaster naturally had to heed the *batteur's* beat when appropriate, he still served as the orchestra's director, using his bow as a baton when necessary to steady the ensemble, and indicating details of interpretation by his movements, attitudes, and signals" (Stowell 23). The concertmaster's fondness of conducting with his bow was a foreshadow of the Romantic era when many former concertmasters went on to make careers in conducting. In contrast to France, other European countries utilized the dual system as they favored vocal pieces. Italian opera and the German and English oratorio was centered on the keyboard (Ostling 19-20). It was therefore natural for the keyboardist to be the general overseer of performances while the concertmaster was an orchestral assistant. A time-beater was an occasional addition to large ensemble pieces if necessary (Ostling 24).

KAPPELMEISTER

Another demonstration of shared leadership with the concertmaster is exemplified in the position of *Kapellmeister*, meaning "chorus-master" (Carse, *Beethoven* 108). Although the German term is used for this example, the Italian and French equivalents are *maestro di capella* and *maître de chapelle*, respectively. Representing the highest authority in the orchestra, this post was held by a composer who was hired to write and direct new works (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 7). The *Kapellmeister* was expected to compose what his employee demanded as well as play within the ensemble he was directing (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 7). The *Kapellmeister* was typically proficient at a keyboard or string instrument and could choose to lead with whichever instrument he was more comfortable (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 12). He was most often the

keyboard-leader. In the case when the *Kapellmeister* led with the violin, the position of concertmaster still existed separately. Despite the *Kapellmeister* having more overall authority than the concertmaster, the two positions had very similar duties. Since most Baroque musicians were also composers, concertmasters were occasionally given the responsibility of composing new works as well (Bekker 57-58).

An excellent example featuring the concertmaster and *Kapellmeister* is that of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). An avid composer and accomplished musician on many instruments, Bach held the position of "court organist and chamber musician" (Wolff 133) for the Duke of Weimar in 1708. Later, when he was offered a job in Halle, Bach used this opportunity as leverage in his current position to be promoted to concertmaster (Wolff 133). In turn, he received higher pay and more responsibilities. The contract for his new position read:

On Friday, March 2, 1714, His Serene Highness the Reigning Duke most graciously conferred upon the quondam Court Organist Bach, at his most humble request, the title of Concertmaster, with official rank below that of Vice-Capellmeister Drese, for which he is to be obliged to perform new works monthly. And for rehearsals of those, the musicians of the capelle are required to appear on his demand. (qtd. in Wolff 147)

Although Bach's new position was below that of the *Vice-Kapellmeister*, Bach had already been receiving higher pay than the *Kapellmeister* since the previous year (Wolff 147). Additionally, as concertmaster, Bach was required to compose and direct new works, which aligned with the general requirements of a *Kapellmeister*. The lines between positions were therefore not always clear.

An excellent violinist, Bach was recognized for his clarity as a concertmaster. He was to hold a position of *Kapellmeister* later in his career (Taruskin 329) and often chose to lead with the violin (Heiles 10). C.P.E. Bach wrote of his father in 1774: "In his youth, and until the approach of old age, he played the violin cleanly and penetratingly, and this kept the orchestra in

better order than he could have done with the harpsichord" (qtd. in Heiles 10). Bach not only played the violin well but also demonstrated excellence in leading with the instrument.

Another example of the concertmaster-*Kapellmeister* relationship involves German violinist Johann Georg Pisendel (1687-1755). Pisendel received his musical education from the great Italian violinists and composers Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709) and Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). In 1712, he became a member of the Dresden Court Orchestra, and in 1728 was given the position of concertmaster. In this post, he was given primary leadership over the orchestra and was required to compose new works for the ensemble (Heiles 10). Three years later, Pisendel was also made concertmaster of the Dresden Opera which utilized the dual system. In this ensemble, there was a clearly delineated *Kapellmeister* position held by composer Johann Adolf Hasse. Pisendel had control over the orchestra while Hasse led the vocalists and acted as general director. The orchestra was greatly lauded for its excellence (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 50). According to Hasse, Pisendel "caught the tempo in his operas better than he himself" (qtd. in Heiles 10). The true credit for the superiority of the ensemble can most likely be given to Pisendel as Hasse was often away traveling (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 49).

As concertmaster, Pisendel's leadership style was meticulous. According to a famous anecdote, Pisendel was said to have personally written bowings into all of the string parts. Although this story was proven untrue, specific dynamic markings can be found in the Dresden parts demonstrating the priority given to uniformity (Spitzer 373). Pisendel was also known for moving his violin scroll in the same manner as a time-beater. Other times he waved his bow like a baton in the manner of the French (Heiles 10). According to historian Acton Ostling, Pisendel was "considered by many to be unsurpassed as a violin director" (19).

Overall, the systems of leadership of the Baroque orchestra greatly varied. The use of the keyboard-leader, concertmaster, or time-beater could appear in any combination. The concertmaster was generally under the authority of the *Kapellmeister* who was either a keyboardist or violinist. Situations could differ, however, by the type of piece being played, and even by the individual preference of the employer as seen with J. S. Bach. Historian Robin Stowell writes an excellent summary of the Baroque concertmaster's varying leadership placement: "Whether the concertmaster functioned as commander-in-chief, co-commander, or as a subordinate depended largely on national custom, period, musical genre and performing venue" (22).

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In terms of social economics, concertmasters tended to range from low to middle class, earning only slightly more than the average Baroque musician. Hired by nobility, musicians were seen as just above the level of servants (Spitzer 399). Singers were the exception as they were treated like celebrities and paid significantly higher salaries (Brown et al., "Opera" par. 41). Employment for orchestral musicians varied from life-long positions to one-time opportunities. Composers and their music tended to stay in one area as traveling and copying parts was a slow and inconvenient process (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 7-8). New music was constantly being written wherever the composer was employed (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 7). As a result, centers of musical activity tended to be found in either secluded, private estates or large cities.

The most secure position for a musician was in the court orchestra of a noble, the benefits of which were of the best kind. Perhaps the most famous and well-documented court orchestra was that at the Esterhazy estate in Austria in the eighteenth century. (Examples from the Esterhazy estate are primarily from the mid- to late eighteenth century, which is the approximate

beginning of the Classical Era. The figures given, however, represent court orchestras for the whole of the eighteenth century.) Although not equalized with servants, the Esterhazy musicians were designated as "house officers" (Spitzer 399). Employment included free housing on the grounds for the musicians as well as their family members (Spitzer 400). Musicians also received free meals, linens, and medical care (Spitzer 400-402). At Esterhazy, the musicians lived in one large house with seventy rooms and were provided with new uniforms annually (Spitzer 400). Strict matters of discipline were also expected. According to a contract from 1767, musicians were expected to obey the *Kapellmeister* without argument, perform in Vienna when required, and remain on the house grounds unless permitted otherwise (Spitzer 400). Contracts lasted only a year, but most musicians at Esterhazy stayed their entire lives (Spitzer 401). In 1780, the annual salary ranged from 300-450 florins (Spitzer 402). In the same year, concertmaster Luigi Tomasini (1741-1808) was paid a significantly larger amount than the average age, receiving 582 florins (Spitzer 402). In general, court musicians were on the pay level "of lower-level government bureaucrats", but enjoyed a more comfortable living due to the extra benefits (Spitzer 402).

Additional examples of sizeable court orchestras were found in "Mannheim, Dresden, Salzburg, Turin, and Madrid" (Spitzer 435). Other secure employment included being hired as a civic musician in a city that did not have a court. Examples of such cities included Leipzig, Hamburg, Bologna, and Danzig (Spitzer 435). These civic musicians were expected to play many different instruments and perform for celebrations, ceremonies, and weddings in the city (Spitzer 429).

Free-lancing was another option of employment in larger cities such as London, Vienna, Paris, Amsterdam, and Venice (Spitzer 435). In contrast to holding a permanent position,

orchestral musicians were hired by many different employers for individual events such as theater performances or social celebrations (Spitzer 405-406). Musicians also earned money by teaching private lessons or running a side trade. For example, violinist Giovanni Carbonnelli, who was a student of Corelli, came to London in 1719 and became concertmaster of the Drury Lane orchestra. In addition to holding his musical post, Carbonnelli made a successful business selling wine (Spitzer 406). Free-lancing also gave a musician the chance to raise his social status through increased income and connections. In a large and diverse city such as London, for example, interacting with higher classes provided excellent networking opportunities. Spitzer writes "Such social mixing was a form of patronage less direct than ticket purchase or subscription: the patron supported the musician by providing access to students, employers, financial advisors, and subscribers" (413). In areas that were less populated with patrons, such as Emilia-Romagna in northern Italy, musicians found it harder to support their income. In some places in Italy, concertmasters were required to give lessons for free (Spitzer 420). As a result, there was a significant presence of Italian immigrant musicians in northern European countries (Spitzer 402).

Music tended to be a family trade that was passed down through generations. Fathers taught sons, and families played together in ensembles. At Esterhazy, for example, several of Tomasini's sons were hired in the orchestra (Spitzer 402). In 1782, the Dresden orchestra had eight violinists listed with the same last name (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 50). Overall, music was an established profession, one clearly separate from amateurs (Spitzer 435). Whether free-lancing or working in more permanent position, musicians yielded sufficient income to support a middle-class existence (Spitzer 435). With the exception of earning slightly more money, Baroque concertmasters seemed to remain in the same social and economic position as their colleagues.

Regardless of being respected within the music community, concertmasters were not given general social distinction because of their leadership position (Stowell 32).

CLASSICAL ERA

INTRODUCTION

As composers in the mid-eighteenth century began to challenge stylistic norms, the concertmaster gained a larger role in the orchestra. One of the most characterizing events of the Classical Era (1750-1820) was the decline of the keyboard instrument in orchestral music (Ostling 20). Historian Robin Stowell describes the change as “a gradual loosening of the [dual system], due in no small way to those changes in taste and style that afforded the keyboard continuo a less significant role” (22). As composers began to incorporate harmony into the orchestral parts, the keyboard instrument was no longer needed as the harmonic backbone (Ostling 19). As a result, control of the ensemble naturally fell to the concertmaster. In the mid-1700s, instrumental music became more popular (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 15). The performances of overtures apart from operas and the development of symphonies and concertos began to highlight the orchestra as its own entity separate from vocalists (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 15). Concertmasters were the most prominent in Germany as this was where instrumental forms were most developed (Carse, *XVIIIth Century* 17). Strict uniformity in areas such as articulation, dynamics, and even bow direction became highly valued in orchestral performance (Spitzer 284). As historian John Spitzer writes, “a disciplined orchestra was no longer an aggregation of individuals making music in parallel; it was a single social unit, audibly and visibly acting as a group” (284). Concertmasters were in charge of making this discipline a reality.

DUTIES

As orchestral performance practice became more standardized in the late eighteenth century, the expectations of a concertmaster were clearly delineated in treatises written by German and Italian musicians. Prominent sources included.

Though consisting primarily of pedagogical information for flute, *On Playing the Flute* includes an important chapter outlining the duties of orchestral musicians including the concertmaster. When the treatise was written, Quantz (1697-1773) was employed as a court musician to King Frederick of Prussia where his main duty was to compose (xxiii). Quantz noticed a lack of uniformity, skills, and good leaders within orchestras of his time and created a written instruction "to serve those who have a firm desire to fulfill their duties in the accompanying body, and to explain, as fully as possible the essentials that must be observed" (206). Written by Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814), a composer, writer, and violinist, *The Duties of a Ripieno Violinist* discusses the duties of an orchestral violinist. In 1775 at the age of twenty-three, Reichardt became *Kapellmeister* of the Berlin Opera under Friedrich the Great (Helm par. 4). The treatise was written a year after receiving his post. *Theoretical and Practical Elements of Music* was written by Francesco Galeazzi (1758-1819), a long-standing concertmaster in Rome. In his treatise, Galeazzi outlined the exact responsibilities of concertmaster as drawn from his own experience (Stowell 22). Collectively, these detailed treatises concurred on a list of concertmaster duties such as conducting, rehearsing, tuning, and managing.

The foremost responsibility of a concertmaster was to establish and maintain the tempo. While playing his own instrument, the concertmaster conducted the ensemble by using exaggerated physical motions with his instrument or body. Bobbing the head, swaying the scroll

of the violin, or waving the bow were all common ways of keeping time (Stowell 24). In some of his other writings, Reichardt mentioned concertmaster Pisendel as an excellent example of conducting with the scroll of his violin. Reichardt writes: "If it was 4/4 time, [Pisendel] moved the violin first downwards, then up, then to the side, then up again; if it was 3/4, then he moved it down once, once to the side, then up" (qtd. in Spitzer 391). These specific motions mimicked that of a conductor's beat pattern introduced by French time-beaters. Quantz wrote that while any instrument could lead the ensemble, the violin is most suited because of its melodic role in the music and natural sound projection (207-208). Playing loudly was a desired characteristic so that the concertmaster could be heard across a large ensemble (Spitzer 391). To increase sight visibility, he was sometimes given a platform on which he stood at the front of the orchestra (Spitzer 392). In moments of particular unsteadiness amongst the orchestra, the concertmaster would often stomp his foot or strike his bow on a stand to regain tempo. Galeazzi wrote that if necessary, a concertmaster could even yell across the ensemble (Spitzer 392). None of these methods, however, were particularly liked by audience members or critics (Stowell 24).

Orchestral players were expected to watch the concertmaster closely. To begin a piece, the concertmaster might beat an empty measure with his bow to demonstrate the tempo (Spitzer 391). Quantz suggested that the violinists memorize the beginning measures in order to watch the concertmaster more carefully (209). In turn, the concertmaster was expected to look and listen "both to the performer of the principal part and to the accompanists, in case it is necessary to accommodate the one and keep the others in order" (Quantz 209). Quantz was referring to a situation where the concertmaster acted as a mediator between a concerto soloist or vocalist and the rest of the orchestra. The concertmaster had to be sensitive to tempo changes by the soloist and lead the ensemble accordingly.

Another duty of the concertmaster was to oversee the uniformity of bowings, ornaments, articulations, dynamics, and interpretation. At the beginning of the Classical Era, the idea developed that orchestral violinists should move their bows collectively in the same direction. It is a common concept that moving a bow up, down, or with slurs changes the articulation of notes. The same bow direction across the violin section therefore creates a more homogenous sound. Achieving this uniformity, however, proved difficult. Composers were rarely known to write bowings into their parts so it was left to the violinists to choose individually, leading to great disparity within the section (Spitzer 372). In the mid-eighteenth century, it became generally accepted that downbeats and strong beats should be played with a down bow (Spitzer 372), but these rules were still not enough to guarantee a result. Uniform bowing was therefore achieved by extreme discipline exerted by the concertmaster over the orchestra. As previously mentioned, Pisendel, the concertmaster of the Dresden orchestra, was said to have written every single bowing into all of the parts (Spitzer 373). Although this particular story has been proven untrue by looking at the original Dresden parts, it demonstrates the amount of control a concertmaster was free to demonstrate. According to Galeazzi, synchronized bowing was also made easier if the section violinists had come from the same school of teaching, as they tended to play with similar ideas and habits (Stowell 26). Overall, uniformity of bow direction was a direct reflection on the concertmaster's leadership skills in rehearsal. As Spitzer writes, "the visual and psychological effect of unanimity suggests that perhaps uniform bowing was not so much a musical imperative as a piece of showmanship" (374).

Similarly to bowing, articulation was determined by the concertmaster as individual parts did not often contain many markings. It was concertmaster's responsibility to determine what type of bow-stroke to use, whether short and detached, or long and legato (Spitzer 372).

Matching the soloist's bow-stroke when accompanying a concerto was also important (Stowell 25). According to Quantz, dynamic levels were to be regulated by the concertmaster, who was to take careful concern that orchestra did not overpower a soloist (210). Quantz also insisted that the lead violinist have a vast knowledge and understanding of the stylistic differences in pieces, and convey this idea to the orchestra through his playing (209). Quantz recommended that the concertmaster have studied "all types of composition in accordance with their style, sentiment, and purpose, and in the correct tempos" (208). Phrasing interpretation was also to be made clear by the concertmaster (Stowell 25).

Additionally, the concertmaster was in charge of determining if and where ornamentations were used. In the Baroque Era, free improvisation on melodies was welcomed and even expected. Performers in the Classical Era, however, began to drift away from this concept. As uniformity became highly valued in the orchestral setting, ornamentation was progressively seen as a disturbance unless directed by the composer himself (Spitzer 384). The first violin section, who often played the melody, was the culprit of frequent criticisms. According to Galeazzi, an entire section of violinists who added their own individual ornaments "would jostle against one another in horrid dissonance, and the result would be an intolerable muddle" (qtd. in Spitzer 381). Several approaches were followed to combat this issue. Any ornamentation was clearly defined by the concertmaster, performed in unison, and rehearsed before the performance (Quantz 382). Another option was limiting ornamentation solely to the concertmaster while the string section played the original melody (382).

Tuning the orchestra was another responsibility of the concertmaster. In the Classical Era, the pitch level and method of tuning was not yet uniform as it differed greatly by area (Spitzer 378). Quantz, Reichardt, and Galeazzi all agreed that the concertmaster should tune first to the

keyboard and then allow the rest of the musicians to tune to him individually (Quantz 210). When no keyboard was present, the tuning pitch was usually taken either from a wind instrument or tuning fork (Stowell 25). Concertmaster and composer Louis Spohr (1784-1859) preferred the oboe as the instrument to which the concertmaster tuned. The tuning fork, however, was useful because it was not affected by temperature change (Spitzer 376). The concertmaster of Darmstadt Hofkapelle, known for his use of the tuning fork, described his tuning process in detail:

So as to miss no opportunity to uphold good order and to create good intonation, I will tune my violin to a tuning fork. I will then proceed from one player to the next, checking whether his A string agrees with mine. After this, the string players, all at the same time, should tune their remaining strings as quickly as possible, while the wind instruments play the various notes of the D major chord. As soon as I give a sign, tuning is over, and everyone should remain quietly in his place. (qtd. in Spitzer 376)

While musicians had been prone to play improvisations after tuning, Quantz was in favor of a moment of silence in order to set the appropriate atmosphere for the first piece and to avoid further adjustment of the pitch through unnecessary playing (Spitzer 375).

The concertmaster was also in charge of leading rehearsals and in some cases, acting as the manager of the orchestra. In the early Classical period, preparation for a concert consisted of very few rehearsals, if any at all. Orchestral playing was associated with sight reading as musicians were often not allowed to leave rehearsal with the music (Spitzer 384). Rehearsals were merely a time for the composer to hear his piece aloud and write edits (Spitzer 386). The use of rehearsals as a time to discuss ideas and practice difficult sections developed later in the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century (Spitzer 386). In 1745, writer Johann Adolph Scheibe described a rehearsal period as a time to make clear the ornamentation, dynamics, and tempos (Spitzer 385-6). Quantz wrote that the concertmaster should also rehearse individually

with violinists who may be playing incorrectly, "lest one, for example, add a shake where others play without it, or slur notes that are attacked by others, or make a mordent omitted by others, after an appoggiatura" (210).

In his writings, Quantz described the concertmaster as a manager and developer of the orchestra. He suggested that the leader rehearse various types of pieces that develop the skill level of the orchestra, as well as encourage opportunities for talented players within the orchestra to perform solos (210-211). Additionally, the orchestra leader had the responsibility of arranging the placement of the instruments and creating appropriate proportions for different pieces (214). As a whole, the quality of the orchestra could be seen as a direct reflection on the rehearsal and management skills of the concertmaster.

In addition to all else, the concertmaster was expected to have a natural teaching and leading ability which earned the respect of his fellow musicians. Quantz did not insist that the lead violinist be the most accomplished or virtuosic in skill, but instead must meet a detailed list of personal traits (208). He wrote, in choosing a leader, "a man should be found who is gifted with both the capacity and the sincerity to impart to the others the skills that they need" (207). He should also have knowledge of executing discipline, and be held in a place of respect and admiration by his colleagues because of his "friendly demeanour and affable conduct" (209). In regards to work ethic, he must put his best effort into every piece so that the composer is obligated to thank the concertmaster for his work (210). Quantz lamented that some concertmasters were chosen based purely on seniority or playing ability, not their leadership skills (207).

As a whole, eighteenth-century writers painted a concertmaster to be the musician who was most knowledgeable in every aspect of the orchestra. He acted as section leader, conductor,

manager, and developer of the orchestra. Quantz concluded his section on the orchestra leader by noting that not everyone is equipped to lead, no matter their playing level. Since the end product of an orchestra varied based on its leader, "it is not difficult to infer how much depends upon a man who possesses all the qualities required for the position of a good musical leader, and what great privileges he deserves in the ensemble" (Quantz 207, 215). In reflecting on the ultimate power of the concertmaster, Galeazzi wrote, "All the violinists of an orchestra must have complete, blind, and perfect subordination to the first violin, whoever he may be. Even in the case where he makes a mistake, they should all unite in following him, since he alone is responsible for the performance of the orchestra" (qtd. in Spitzer 397).

MANNHEIM CONCERTMASTERS

Few concertmasters in the eighteenth century met the demanding requirements as well as John Stamitz (1717-1757) and Christian Cannabich (1731-1798). Stamitz and Cannabich were successive concertmasters of the Mannheim Court Orchestra, an ensemble characterized by its precision, uniformity, and progressive use of dynamics. These men were recognized for their outstanding leadership confirmed in the discipline and prowess of their orchestras.

Stamitz began as a section violinist at Mannheim in 1744-5. A favorite of the Elector, he was given a higher salary than the two current concertmasters Carl Offhuis and Alexander Toeschi (Wurtz par. 8). In 1746, Stamitz became concertmaster and in 1750 was promoted to "director of instrumental music" (Heiles 12). He was also a prolific composer, writing "concerti and more than fifty pieces of orchestral music for the court" (Heiles 12). Stamitz was famous for enforcing strict discipline which resulted in incredible precision on behalf of the entire ensemble. His intense training of the players earned the term the "Mannheim school" which became a commonly recognized phrase by the end of the eighteenth century (Wurtz par. 8). As mentioned,

Galeazzi considered that the easiest way to achieve uniformity in a section was for the violinists to come from the same school of teaching (Stowell 26). Stamitz and the Mannheim violinists were a prime example.

Christian Cannabich was a student of Stamitz and replaced him as concertmaster when he died in 1757. He had been a section violinist under Stamitz's leadership and was sent by Elector Carl Theodor to study in Italy in 1748. Cannabich continued Stamitz's legacy of discipline and received even more accolades than his teacher. Christian Schubart, a German poet and composer, said of him:

He has invented a totally new bowing technique and possesses the gift of holding the largest orchestra together by nothing more than the nod of his head and the flick of his elbow. *He* is really the creator of the coordinated execution characteristics of the Palatine orchestra. He is the inventor of all those magical devices that are now admired by the whole of Europe. (qtd. in Wurtz par. 9)

Cannabich also embodied the concertmaster requirements outlined by Quantz in regards to uniformity in bowings, articulations, and ornaments. A critic from the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung wrote of the orchestra in 1799: 'I found an orchestra that marched in step like a well-trained bataillon. It was a joy to see how all the bows rose and fell together, and a joy to hear how each and every appoggiatura was executed to a man by this full orchestra of more than 50 persons" (qtd. in Spitzer 374). Cannabich's teaching ability was thought to be unsurpassed in the eighteenth century (Stowell 26).

ROMANTIC PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

The concertmaster's role in the orchestra endured great change during the Romantic Era (roughly 1800-1900) when new compositional ideas led to the restructuring of the orchestra and its personnel. The most important adjustment was the addition of an instrument-less conductor

who replaced the Classical concertmaster as music director and took sole charge of the orchestra. In turn, the Romantic concertmaster became the right-hand of the conductor, assisting the orchestra in the execution of the conductor's wishes. As Romantic compositions raised the technical level of orchestral playing, the concertmaster became more internally focused on the string section and even his own playing as he faced an influx of concertmaster solos. Overall, Romantic concertmasters remained highly respected and experienced individuals who also led musical careers outside of the orchestra as pedagogues, soloists, and composers. Examining the transformation of the orchestra lends greater understanding to the challenges that concertmasters faced throughout the nineteenth century.

ROMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS

Primarily an artistic movement, the Romantic era is characterized by an emphasis on emotion, expression, and self-promotion of the creator. As historian Jim Samson describes, there was a "growing importance of expression as a source of aesthetic value, overriding the claims of formal propriety and convention" (par. 12). Disregard for traditional rules for the sake of expression is found directly in the composition of Romantic music as well as the instrumentation. In the orchestra, these ideas materialized in the form of new instruments, more players, and more virtuosic parts.

These particular characteristics can be seen in the orchestral writing of composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) who wrote music that provided a transition from the Classical to Romantic era. A student of Haydn, Beethoven composed in the Classical style but began writing works heralding what were later referred to as Romantic in compositional form and orchestral virtuosity and size. This shift had much to do with his psychological state as he dealt with his impending deafness and his raw desire to demonstrate his musical genius to the world (Taruskin

484). Beethoven exemplified the Romantic idea of self-expression where the emotions of the composer himself play a role in the music. His symphonies, beginning with the Third, began to demonstrate a change in orchestral writing and instrumentation. Premiered in 1803, the Third Symphony required a larger horn section and demanded more virtuosity of the musicians (Carse, *Beethoven* 91). The Fifth Symphony included entirely new instruments in the ensemble – piccolo and trombones. In 1824, the orchestra premiering Beethoven's Ninth Symphony contained forty-six string players while the average number was only twenty-one (Carse, *Beethoven* 24). In addition to the increased number of instruments, the technical level of Beethoven's writing was challenging for all instruments – winds, brass, and strings (Carse, *Beethoven* 91).

It is important to note that Beethoven's symphonies were still led by the concertmaster, although the difficulty of the pieces anticipated a coming change in leadership. Beethoven was sometimes described as having conducted or led his own symphonies, but this is not to be taken in the literal sense. Music historian Adam Carse is adamant in his statement "we must not place a baton in [Beethoven's] hand, for there is no evidence that he ever handled such a thing" (*Beethoven* 296). Beethoven premiered many of his works in Vienna which utilized the dual system of leadership between the concertmaster and *Kapellmeister* depending on the type of piece (Carse, *Beethoven* 307). References of Beethoven conducting likely meant he acted as time-keeper who beat a roll of paper or merely sat on stage at the piano (Carse, *Beethoven* 307). In one instance, Beethoven was said to have conducted a performance of his C minor piano concerto, when in actuality he was merely turning pages for the soloist (Carse, *Beethoven* 307). The term "conducting" therefore had not yet acquired an established meaning, and the concertmaster was still most certainly at the helm.

Throughout the Romantic era, composers such as Hector Berlioz, Felix Mendelssohn, Richard Wagner, and Richard Strauss continued to experiment with the expanded orchestra that Beethoven presented. New colors and sounds continued to expand the breadth of the orchestra. The growth of the string section required larger wind and brass sections to balance the sound (Mahler and Lipiner 40). By the early 1800s, it became common to use two of each woodwind instruments, horns, trumpets, and percussion (Carse, *Beethoven* 19). The brass section grew even larger and louder with the addition of more horns, trombones, and the tuba (Carse, *Beethoven* 19). The string section continued to expand as well, reaching up to fifty or more players (Carse, *Beethoven* 19). In general, the size of the orchestra become standard across Europe. In Dresden in 1846, Wagner's string section consisted of twenty-two violins, eight violas, seven cellos, and six basses. Berlioz's "ideal concert-orchestra" was twenty-one first-violins, twenty second-violins, eighteen violas, fifteen celli, and ten bassi. In 1842, the Philharmonic in London had thirty-two violins, ten violas, eight celli and seven bassi (Carse, *Beethoven* 25-26). For the concertmaster, the sheer size of the orchestra caused issues in sight lines, anticipating the need for another leader (Carse, *Beethoven* 295).

Romantic composers drastically challenged the technical skills of orchestral musicians by increasing the difficulty of individual parts. Historian Adam Carse writes "What was expected of the solo player in one half-century was expected of the *ripieno* [orchestral] player in the succeeding half-century and the progress was continued during the whole of the 19th century" (*Beethoven* 391). In general, the technical playing level required from orchestral musicians was much lower than that of a soloist. In the Romantic era, however, orchestral players were expected to play with virtuosity of a soloist. For example, although advanced violin technique

one particular instrument for melodic material such as Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) with

had existed in solo works since the time of Corelli and later J. S. Bach, orchestral repertoire had remained bare of such challenging techniques until the Romantic era.

For the string section, this new virtuosity in orchestral playing was seen in the use of extended ranges and unique textures. Carse describes the composers' attitude towards the string section: "they demanded from it more power, more variety and more colour" (*Beethoven* 23). With regards to range, Beethoven did not write higher than the note A6 for the violins in his symphonies (Wagner 25). The instrument, however, can play up to an octave higher. By exploiting the entire upper range of the violin, the Romantic composers were able to add more color and strength to the section. Another textural technique was the use of *divisi*: where the traditional string sections were divided into even smaller sections. This division achieved new textures in the sound by creating layers of harmony. French composer Hector Berlioz was particularly fond of the use of *divisi* for effect (Berlioz 73). His piece *Symphonie Fantastique*, premiered in 1830, is an excellent example of several techniques combined at once. In the opening of the final movement, the violins are divided into six parts, playing *tremolo* softly in the high register. The effect is an eerie atmosphere in which the cellos enter with the melody.

Virtuosic solo roles were also given to individual instruments, breaking traditional rules of instrumentation. For example, in Baroque and Classical compositions, the melody was solely given to the first violins and winds. Romantic composers, however, began to give certain instruments new roles and spotlights. Historian Alan Houtchens writes that Berlioz was often "assigning a specific role to a particular instrument and using it extensively in a soloistic capacity" (174). For example, in *Symphonie Fantastique*, a short melody called the *idée fixe* is passed by solo wind instruments including the clarinet, flute, and oboe. Some composers favored one particular instrument for melodic material such as Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) with

the clarinet, and Strauss with the French horn (Houtchens 174). For the violins, this manifested in the popularity of concertmaster solos in the Romantic repertoire.

Virtuosity was also demanded of the orchestra as a collective ensemble. In this case, there were virtuosic parts for all involved, not just solo instruments. Such examples included: “Berlioz’s ‘Queen Mab Scherzo’ from *Roméo et Juliette*, Mendelssohn’s saltarello finale of *Italian Symphony*, and the scherzo of Schumann’s 2nd Symphony” (Houtchens 174).

THE NEED FOR A CONDUCTOR

The new, imposing demands on the orchestra caused the concertmaster’s responsibilities to become increasingly difficult. Concertmasters were now faced with harder individual parts, more complicated scores, and a larger orchestra where line of sight was an issue. The means to lead a Mozart or Haydn symphony could no longer achieve the same results. As historian Adam Carse writes:

The need for a time-beating interpretive conductor began when orchestras grew larger and could not be so compactly grouped; when the players had to be spread out over wider spaces and could not all see or hear one another or their leader; when the sound had to travel further, and when it grew in volume; when the steady pulse of the music was not so constant and unbroken; when the time and tempo changed more frequently, and pauses, rallentandos and accelerandos broke up the uniformity and regularity of the beat; when the structure and texture of the music became less transparent, and the rhythm was more irregular; when the orchestration and lay-out became more complex and the entries of the instruments were not so obvious; when the dynamics changed more often, and the light and shade required more sensitive adjustment; when the execution of the parts became more exacting and more precision was demanded; when, in consequence of all these things, a good ensemble was more difficult to attain. (*Beethoven* 295)

The concertmaster’s difficulties in leading were increased not only by the larger size and sound of the orchestra, but also by the abundant nuances of rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and color found in the music. The concertmaster struggled to convey all that was necessary by himself. In

observing these new issues, critics in the mid-1800s “pointed out the necessity of continuous time beating, noting the insufficiency of a violinist’s body motions or gestures with the bow to lead the new larger ensembles” (Heiles 18). The challenge of the concertmaster role grew so large that it became necessary to split the responsibilities for the sake of accomplishing the musical intentions.

The solution was found in a new figure in the musical realm: an instrument-less conductor. This change was not fully welcomed and faced much criticism; some establishments were more accepting than others. Historically, “during the 18th century it had been held that whoever composed the music was the one best fitted to superintend the performances of it; for ‘conducting’ a musical piece at that time implied nothing more than superintending the performance” (Carse, *Beethoven* 290). Composers therefore became the first conductors in the Romantic era so that they could oversee the execution of their works. This proved true for people such as Liszt, Wagner, Berlioz, and Schumann (Carse, *Beethoven* 290). Other composers/conductors of the time showed more affinity for the art of conducting than others. These included Spohr, Weber, Mendelssohn, and Spontini (Carse, *Beethoven* 290). They were able to coax uniform expression from the ensemble.

The first conductors acted similarly to time-beaters from the Baroque and Classical eras. The Romantic conductor took on the roles of time-keeper, rehearsal manager, and director, which had all been previously held by the concertmaster. The idea that the conductor was an autonomous, musical being did not exist until the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the beginning of the 1800s, most conductors were composers, until “the second-half of the century, when the specialist-conductor, who had no ambitions as either composer or player, began to develop. But even then all conductors began their careers as composers or players. It was left to

the present century to produce those who started from scratch as conductors and nothing else” (Carse, *Beethoven* 291).

NEW CONCERTMASTER ROLES

With the addition of a conductor, the concertmaster was displaced from his chief placement in the orchestra. The relationship between the conductor and concertmaster, however, was still strong, not quite unlike the dual-system seen in the Baroque era. The conductor depended heavily on the concertmaster for support. This was demonstrated by the fact that in some cases concertmasters stood on their own podium close to the conductor. Historian Anne Mischakoff Heiles conveys that “this was thought mainly to maintain a unified effect upon the audience and so orchestra members could see the director as well as the leader” (19). There are many examples in history of the concertmaster being held in high regard by the conductor as a friend and colleague whom he could ask advice (Heiles 22). The concertmaster became the conductor’s right hand and the primary force by which his ideas were interpreted (Heiles 24).

As concertmasters surrendered total control of the ensemble to the conductor, they began to focus their responsibilities on the string section. Describing this new concentration, Heiles writes:

In Europe and in America the concertmaster’s role became more specialized and more intense. Clearly subservient to the conductor, concertmasters concentrated on excellent performance that would inspire other string players to higher levels, leadership that would help unify the string section, and performance details (bowings, articulations, attacks and chords, ornaments) that would best enhance a conductor’s interpretation. (24)

Such skills were not new to the concertmaster’s role, but were now concentrated on the string section. The increasing technical demands required of the strings necessitated the concertmaster’s full attention.

The concertmaster also began to stand out as an individual musical voice with the popular use of concertmaster solos in the Romantic repertoire. Although rare, concertmaster solos had existed in the Baroque and Classical eras in works by J. S. Bach and Haydn. The appearance of concertmaster solos, however, greatly increased in the nineteenth century. The sound of an individual violin as opposed to an entire section was a new, appealing texture to composers. Ranging from a few measures to a whole movement, these solos tended to display the technical and musical prowess of the player. Solos could vary from slow melodic lines to fast virtuosic passages. Beethoven wrote a rather extensive concertmaster solo throughout the Sanctus movement of *Missa Solemnis* (1824). In this example, the violin plays a long, slow melody in the high range of the instrument that projects over the choir and orchestra. In contrast, Strauss wrote a short, virtuosic solo in *Till Eulenspiegel* (1895). In some instances, the concertmaster solos were so prominent that the piece took on the form of a violin concerto. Such examples are Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* (1898) and Rimsky Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (1888). By the late nineteenth century, nearly every major orchestral composer included a concertmaster solo in their works. Composers such as Brahms, Strauss, Dvorak, Mahler, Schumann, Verdi, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky were among the list.

Outside of the orchestra itself, the concertmasters held other posts or jobs such as traveling soloists or teachers within the music community. During the Romantic era, the musical world was more developed and no longer existed under such constraints as the patronage system. The public perception of a musician had drastically changed as concertmasters became highly respected individuals both musically and socially.

SUCCESSFUL CONCERTMASTERS

The shift in orchestral leadership from concertmaster to conductor occurred gradually across Europe during the years 1800-1850. The concertmaster's role as a conductor was slowly overtaken by those who specialized in conducting. In some instances, the concertmaster himself set the violin aside and started a new career as a conductor. This situation occurred quite often; it was only natural that the violin-leader would make the transition to conductor having so much prior experience leading an ensemble. Some violinists-turned-conductors continued to use violin bows to conduct while others switched to a baton.

As orchestras began to experience new demands from composers, concertmasters from various countries faced the changing orchestral dynamics in different ways. Insight into the shifts in leadership can be further examined through the lives of David, Joachim, Spohr, and Habeneck. These influential concertmasters serve as examples for how concertmasters were affected particularly in Germany and France.

One of the best examples of the concertmaster to conductor relationship in the Romantic era was that of Ferdinand David and Felix Mendelssohn. The son of a successful business-man, German violinist Ferdinand David (1810-1873) showed musical talent at a young age. He studied with violinist Louis Spohr and became highly experienced as an orchestral, chamber, and soloist musician. He toured Europe with his sister Louise who was a pianist, and was a member of the Konigstadt Theater orchestra at sixteen years old. David was also a composer and his works included concerti for strings and winds, as well as editions of chamber works. Later, he was the concertmaster of Stadttheater in Leipzig. He also held the position of first violin in the quartet of patron Darkl von Liphart. David was long-standing friends with composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). They often performed chamber music together, and David received the dedication

for and premiered Mendelssohn's only violin concerto, giving advice and feedback during its construction.

Mendelssohn was a composer and pianist who became popular from a young age; early on, he showed an affinity for conducting with a baton. In 1835, he was assigned musical director of the Gewandhaus orchestra, a premiere ensemble in Leipzig, Germany. In the nineteenth century, Leipzig was a center of musical activity in Europe where many composers and performers gathered. The Gewandhaus orchestra had been led previously by concertmaster Heinrich August Matthai (1781-1835); however, as soon as Mendelssohn was appointed director he quickly changed the leadership system to baton-led conducting with himself as the conductor. Additionally, he replaced Matthai and appointed Ferdinand David as concertmaster.

The first concert following the change was reviewed by a critic in *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*: "In the second part we had Beethoven's fourth symphony, and seldom have we heard it so excellently played. As a new and desirable plan, the musical director conducted the symphony; for when the leader, who must play first fiddle, does this, he greatly interferes with his own performance in looking after the time of the others" (Carse, *Beethoven* 301). It was apparent that baton-conducting greatly improved the quality of performance, and new leadership allowed the concertmaster to focus on the execution of his own part. However, composer and pianist Robert Schumann was one of the critics who was not convinced of the new baton-leadership, claiming "the orchestra should stand like a republic in a symphony, refusing to acknowledge a superior" (Carse, *Beethoven* 305). Regardless of criticism, Mendelssohn became an immensely important figure in musical development.

As concertmaster, however, David still had a great influence over the orchestra. Despite Mendelssohn's new changes, the concertmaster position was heavily depended on. The

relationship of conductor-concertmaster was one of mutual dependence and shared responsibilities. Historian Anne Mischkoff Heiles describes David as "Mendelssohn's assistant conductor" (20). During the Gewandhaus 1837-8 concert season, the works of the older composers were highlighted and were led individually by David or Mendelssohn at different times. During the 1841 season, David was said to have led performances of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (Heiles 20). This was appropriate to use the older system of leadership as these pieces were originally lead by the concertmaster. David also led concertos featuring soloists (Heiles 20). Using a baton, Mendelssohn conducted all repertoire from the Romantic era (Heiles 20). The season 1841-2 proved interesting as Mendelssohn took leave from the orchestra and left the sole leadership to David. While David had previously been accustomed to leading older works under the concertmaster leadership style, he found leading all types of works, particularly the newer ones, to be more challenging. A description of his experience can be seen in a letter to Mendelssohn:

But it is embarrassing to have to conduct and lead at the same time. The more modern pieces, and quite new works, demand conducting throughout, and by one who is himself not required to play. At the most critical moments I find that I must always beat the time, and these are just the moments when it is most important that I should be playing. Nevertheless, I am quite glad to have the opportunity of gaining experience in this capacity, and when you come back again I shall be all the better violinist for it. (qtd. in Carse, *Beethoven* 301)

David's comments further outline the issue that more difficult individual parts hindered the concertmaster's ability to lead the entire ensemble.

As an individual, David excelled in his ability to "set the demeanor, tone, and style for his section, still another new function of the [concertmaster] position" (Heiles 21). In combination with Mendelssohn, David trained the orchestra much like Stamitz did Mannheim. In his memoirs, Berlioz wrote of a visit to Germany in 1843. Having conducted the Gewandhaus

orchestra, he wrote "... communication between the conductor and each member of the orchestra is so easy, and the players, besides being capital musicians, have been trained by Mendelssohn and David to such a pitch of discipline and concentration that two rehearsals sufficed for putting on a long programme." (qtd. in Heiles 21). The position of concertmaster had such weight as to bargain for pay increase. In 1852, David was offered a position in Cologne, but renewed his contract with Gewandhaus and was given fewer responsibilities with more pay (Mell, par. 4). Several sources mention that David was more involved in conducting close to the end of his life, but are not specific as to where, whether this is referring to his concertmaster position at Gewandhaus or elsewhere (Mell par. 4). The following description of David follows closely with Quantz's description of qualities found in a leader. Historian Albert Mell writes of David, "He possessed all the attributes of the ideal leader: an energetic attack, full tone and solid technique, together with responsibility, quickness of perception and musical intelligence, qualities which also made him an excellent conductor" (par. 6, Mell). The initial qualities of a concertmaster laid down by Quantz in the Classical era were still true of the Romantic concertmaster. Strong leadership skills as well as technical prowess were necessary, but now given a new outlet in unifying the string section. David was highly respected by his colleagues and was given a standing ovation and celebration on the 25th anniversary of his concertmaster chair at Gewandhaus. He once said "I should not wish to live any more if I cannot play the violin" (Heiles 21).

Many concertmasters of the Romantic era were all-star musicians with similar background and experience. The concertmaster position was only a small portion of their careers, and as concertmasters they were powerful enough to have leverage in their position and ultimately dismiss it if it was not to their liking. An example of this was Hungarian violinist

Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), a student of David at Leipzig Conservatory. A child prodigy, Joachim became famous a soloist, performing the Beethoven concerto in London with Mendelssohn at the age of thirteen. In 1846, Joachim became a section violinist of the Gewandhaus orchestra and at age seventeen was appointed as Vice-Konzertmeister, "sharing the concertmaster position with David at the opera house as well as teaching daily at Leipzig Conservatory" (Heiles 22). A composer and chamber musician, Joachim was close friends with popular composers of the time, including Clara and Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms, and performed their works often (Heiles 22). In 1850, he was given the position of concertmaster under composer Franz Liszt who was Kapellmeister in Weimar. (Liszt is an example of the Romantic composer/conductor figure as he was a composer given the position of conductor in order to lead his own pieces.) Much like David and Mendelssohn, Joachim and Liszt were good colleagues with mutual respect for the other's opinion (Heiles 22). Joachim was even given five months out of the year to tour freely as soloist and chamber musician. In his third year of the position, however, Joachim began to find distaste in "what he considered Liszt's pretentious excesses, especially in the symphonic poems" and took a concertmaster position at the Hanover Court Orchestra (Heiles 23). Joachim continued to tour across Europe, but eventually became frustrated with the "servility of his position" (Heiles 23) in Hanover and resigned after a series of issues with the manager. He seemed to have an obvious love for touring as a soloist, as he never seemed to settle in a concertmaster position for long, unlike David who was a concertmaster most of his life. The last part of Joachim's life was devoted to teaching and performing chamber music.

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complete disappearance of concertmaster leadership. The responsibilities were shared based on the specific pieces. Neither were the concertmasters treated with ill-respect; they maintained an influential leadership position, but not necessarily the ultimate one. Perhaps the best explanation comes from French composer Berlioz in his 1843 review of German conductors:

First the composers himself, who almost always conducts his own rehearsals and performances, without in the least wounding the conductor's self-love; next, the *Kapellmeister*, usually an able composer, who conducts the principal operas and all important musical works of which the authors (composers) are either absent or dead; and the leader, who directs the small operas and ballets, and also acts as first violin when not conducting, in which case he conveys the *Kapellmeister's* remarks and directions to the further end of the orchestra, superintends the material details of the studies, sees that nothing is wanting either in the way of music or instruments, and sometimes points out the bowing or phrasing of a passage – a task forbidden to the *Kapellmeister*, who always conducts with a baton. (Carse, *Beethoven* 302)

Berlioz identified three different figures who were seen conducting: the composer, *Kapellmeister*, and the “leader” or concertmaster. In some cases, therefore, the concertmaster did take on the role of conductor for a particular piece, but otherwise returned to his duties as first-chair violin.

Some concertmasters turned to conducting completely, setting aside the violin permanently. One such example is German violinist Louis Spohr (1784-1859). Born to musical parents, Spohr began playing the violin at five years of age, studying with orchestral violinist Gottfried Kunisch and later Konzertmeister Charles Louis Maucourt. Orchestral playing was also an intricate part of his early education as he gained experience playing in a theatre orchestra (Brown, “Spohr” par. 3). Another teacher included violinist Franz Ech from the Mannheim orchestra. An important figure in the violin world, Spohr became a well-established soloist, composer, and pedagogue. From 1805-1812, Spohr held the position of *Konzermeister* of the

Gotha Court Orchestra. In this position, he led the orchestra in the traditional way of playing but stopped to motion the beats when the ensemble needed assistance.

In 1810, however, when directing a music festival in Frankenhausen, Spohr was said to conduct by waving a roll of paper in the air (Carse, *Beethoven* 299). This concert was significant as it contained a large amount of instrumental music including a symphony and overture along with an oratorio (Carse, *Beethoven* 299). While time-beating with a roll of paper was not a new concept, Spohr used this system for both choral and symphonic works instead of leading as the concertmaster. During his post as *Kapellmeister* of the Frankfurt opera from 1815-1817, Spohr fully embraced the conducting paradigm. At first, he began with the concertmaster style of leadership with which the orchestra members were familiar. Spohr writes, "But I soon accustomed them to so precise a practice of their parts that such assistance as that was soon no longer necessary. I now laid the violin aside and directed in the French style, with the baton" (qtd. in Carse, *Beethoven* 299). In this instance, Spohr is referring to the association with the baton that the French had established for themselves in the Baroque period with the use of the time-beater. After this post, Spohr held several directing positions and continued his career as a conductor.

Spohr's preference for the French style of conducting is an important distinction. Most time-beaters, including the concertmasters themselves, created audible sounds by whacking a roll of paper or bow, or stamping a stick. The French, however, had used both audible and visual time-beating since the Baroque era and were particularly fond of conducting by waving a violin bow or baton. (Waving as opposed to tapping an object was significant as it began to move away from the typical audible time-beater and closer to the modern conductor.) In turn, visual time-beating became favorable to the Germans because it was silent. Even before Spohr's appearance

with the roll of paper in 1810, German critics had begun to show a preference for visual time-keeping, condemning the old concertmaster style as too obtrusive. For example, in 1807, Theorist Gottfried Weber wrote an article on the subject in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, a premiere music critic magazine in Germany. He wrote:

“Whoever likes to hear an audible time-beat, whoever can endure foot-stamping, or tapping on the desk with a violin bow, let him entrust the direction to a violinist-leader. But who would gladly see this disorder abolished, let him place one man at the head of everything, one who is not concerned with any particular part, one who can give his undivided attention to the whole, one who only beats time, not by hammering on the music desk, but only by means of visible signs” (Carse, *Beethoven* 298).

The preference for a silent time-beating as the means of conducting, therefore, gained popularity in Germany very quickly. Spohr was one of the leading influences of this movement.

In France during the first half of the nineteenth century, most conductors were concertmasters. Faced with more challenging music, the French concertmaster began to play less and conduct more with his bow. At some point the violin was set aside entirely and only used to demonstrate a passage or idea in rehearsal (Carse, *Beethoven* 314). A prime example is violinist-conductor Francois-Antoine Habeneck (1781-1849) who greatly influenced the orchestral and pedagogical world of music.

A student at the Paris Conservatoire in 1800, Habeneck became conductor of the student orchestra in 1806. This appointment was a special privilege given to the yearly first-prize violinist, but Habeneck's concertmaster skills were so notable that he was given the role indefinitely (Carse, *Beethoven* 90). Under Habeneck's leadership, the orchestra gave the “Paris premieres” of Beethoven's first three symphonies (Heiles 16). In 1825, he was made professor of violin at the Conservatoire. Habeneck, along with French violinists Rodolphe Kreutzer, Pierre Baillot, and Pierre Rode, developed one of the most prestigious violin schools in Europe (Heiles

16). These men were all examples of violinists who had enormous careers as concertmasters, conductors, soloists, and pedagogues.

A member of the Paris Opera, Habeneck shared the post of *premier chef* or concertmaster until 1831 when he gained sole leadership of the ensemble. In 1828, he also founded a new orchestra, Orchestra de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, of which he was concertmaster. Both of these ensembles consisted mostly of current or graduated Conservatoire students, creating “a natural unity of style” (Heiles 17). Like Mannheim, these orchestras are further examples of uniformity made easier by the ensemble containing violinists who came from the same school of teaching. As concertmaster, Habeneck directed these ensembles by playing and stopping to conduct with his bow when necessary. By the late 1830s, Habeneck conducted with his bow so much that he rarely played the violin (Heiles 18). In this way, Habeneck transitioned almost completely into the role of conductor. Habeneck’s leadership was also an impressive feat as the Paris Opera and Orchestra de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris both contained around eighty members (Heiles 17). An English review of the Paris Opera in 1836 read: “It is a machine, in short, in perfect order, and under that guidance of experience and intellect; - for these, as regards French music, are thoroughly personified in M. Habeneck” (qtd. in Heiles 17).

According to Heiles, of all the French concertmaster-conductors, Habeneck “had the greatest impact on orchestral history and how the concertmaster position evolved” (16). Famous for premiering foreign works in Paris, Habeneck led performances of German, Italian, and French operatic and symphonic works by composers such as Rossini, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and Auber. In addition, Habeneck was known for his emphasis on rehearsals which he found necessary due to the increased difficulty of Romantic works. For example, in

preparation for the Paris premiere, he held seven rehearsals solely for the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* “despite the fact that Mendelssohn found the performance good after the second rehearsal” (qtd. in Heiles 17). Such intense rehearsal methodology and discipline on behalf of Habeneck greatly contributed to the general advancement of orchestral execution (Heiles 17). In the early nineteenth century, France was at the forefront of orchestral performance quality in Europe. According to Carse, “even Germans had to admit that it was in Paris that they heard the best performances of Beethoven’s symphonies. On the very rare occasions when they did put a non-violinist in charge of a Paris orchestra, the result was most unsatisfactory” (*Beethoven* 315).

By the time of Habeneck’s death halfway through the nineteenth century, it became rare for a French conductor’s post to be held by a concertmaster (Heiles 18). In contrast to the sudden shift in German orchestra leadership as seen with Mendelssohn and David, the French concertmasters created a smoother transition as they took on the challenges of the Romantic era themselves before fully surrendering to a conductor. Habeneck was the embodiment of this period of French concertmasters.

CONCLUSION

In light of the changing orchestral environment, the concertmasters of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras proved to be experienced musicians, effective teachers, and respected leaders. Musically, concertmasters were skilled above all others and were trained by some of the best violin pedagogues of the eras. Concertmasters tended to study with concertmasters, such as Cannabich with Stamitz and David with Spohr. Many also enjoyed popularity as soloists and composers. No matter their exact authoritative position, concertmasters

were always in a place of instructing other musicians, whether as director of the entire ensemble like J.S. Bach or as assistant to the conductor like Joachim. The extent of the concertmaster's discipline had a direct effect on the quality of the ensemble. Ever-adapting, the concertmaster's role as leader of the orchestra was molded and transformed through each era. Whether a subordinate or superior, the concertmaster represented a position of power and respect. As Galeazzi wrote: "Few are the arts in which there is a position as difficult to sustain as that of the concertmaster" (qtd. in Stowell 32). As performers, conductors, composers, managers, leaders, assistants, and educators, the concertmasters of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras deserve recognition as key historical figures of the orchestra.

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THE SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE CONCERTMASTER FROM THE
BAROQUE, CLASSICAL, AND ROMANTIC ERAS

By

Leah E. Bonas

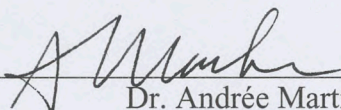
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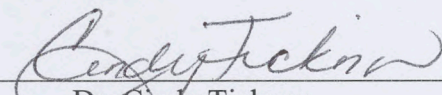
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